



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

August 10, 2006

# News Release

## **Nine charged in international human smuggling and prostitution ring** *Criminal organization transported Asian women to national network of brothels*

SEATTLE -- Nine people were charged here this morning for their role in a sophisticated prostitution ring that allegedly smuggled Asian women into the United States to work at brothels in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the country.

The charges, which stem from an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the FBI, and the Seattle Police Department, include transporting individuals to further prostitution, transporting and harboring illegal aliens, and money laundering.

According to court documents, one of the alleged ringleaders in the scheme was Yong Jun Kang, 36, of Seattle. Kang is accused of conspiring to smuggle Asian women into the United States to work at brothels he operated in Seattle and Portland, Oregon. After working at Kang's establishments for approximately two weeks, the women were typically transferred to other brothels throughout the United States.

Information about the scheme first surfaced in April 2004 when the Eastside Narcotics Task Force raided a Bellevue establishment known as the Apple Spa after determining it was a front for prostitution. Kang, and another one of the defendants in the case, Keshing Zhu, 38, were involved in operating the Apple Spa.

The criminal complaint goes on to describes how, over the course of the nearly two-year investigation, agents used confidential informants, court approved wiretaps, and global positioning technology to monitor the ring's activities. During the probe, investigators tracked tens of thousands of dollars being transferred from the United States to possible smuggling "agents" in China who arranged for the women to be brought here. In conversations with confidential sources and on wiretapped telephone calls, the conspirators discussed how some of the women paid as much as \$50,000 each to travel to the United States hidden inside shipping containers. Other brothel workers were smuggled into the country across the U.S.-Canada border. The defendants then allegedly forced the women to work in the brothels to pay off their smuggling fees. In a recorded telephone conversation, one of the defendants complained about losing large amounts of money when the smuggled women fled before paying off their debts.

The investigation determined the women working in the brothels were citizens of China, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, and Laos. In telephone conversations, the defendants used code when discussing the brothel workers, referring to them as different types of ethnic foods, automobiles, and ships.

In addition to Khang and Zhu, the others charged in the case are:

- Penquan Xie, 48, and Zhen Qu, 49, both of Los Angeles, who worked for Kang as brothel managers;
- Zhenhua Liu, 51, of Seattle, who operated another Seattle brothel;
- Lianchen Ning, 47, of Seattle, who transported women to and from the brothels and Sea-Tac airport;
- Rujng Jiang, 36, of Seattle, who ran a Seattle escort service that provided Asian prostitutes to customers calling from homes, apartments, and hotels;
- Thongyot Liamurai, 39, of Seattle, who worked as a prostitute for both Kang and Zhu and was a close confident of Kang's; and
- Bing Wang, age unknown, who was arrested at Liu's brothel this morning where he worked as the manager.

The investigation is continuing into the brothel network in other U.S. cities. If convicted the defendants face up to 20 years in prison.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*